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Examining Student Satisfaction with the Student Services Center at a Local Community College

Natasja Rudge

The College at Brockport, State University of New York

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Natasja Rudge

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Abstract

This thesis examines student satisfaction with the Student Services Department at a local community college. Existing literature on what contributes to student satisfaction is discussed. A phenomenological qualitative study was conducted to gain insight about the student experience of the Student Services Department. Ten students were chosen to participate in a focus group using a convenience sample. The major findings indicated that while students were overall satisfied with Student Services, areas such as knowledge and demeanor of staff and consistency of services between campuses could use improvement. Recommendations for program improvement are increased and open communication with students and professional development for staff.

Examining Student Satisfaction with Student Services at a Local Community College

Understanding student satisfaction with their student services department can be useful for institutions of higher education to help them to identify their strengths and pinpoint areas that could be improved. Determining student satisfaction should go beyond simply understanding their perception of student services, however. It should entail an in-depth focus on the student experience. To understand the experience fully, it is not enough to know how much students are satisfied with student services. It is important to understand what factors contribute to student satisfaction, how student services departments are developed, models of student affairs that colleges and universities can use, and how the needs of students can be addressed by the services offered. The review of the literature outlines research in the aforementioned topics. Colwell (2006, p. 53) stated that student affairs professionals must be colleagues with “shared values, goals, language, and committed to creating a single cohesive educational environment and experience for each student.” The research suggests that a cohesive and seamless environment is what significantly contributes to student success. In order to accomplish this, a strong, collaborative relationship between academic and student services should exist. According to Flanagan (2006), students who feel connected to their institution both academically and socially are more likely to graduate. Examining student needs is important. Brock (2010) states that it has become evident that student services are associated with student persistence in completing college. In order to understand why, first student needs must be discussed. This study strives to determine the experience of students with Student Services at a local community college. The study is a phenomenological, qualitative attempt to identify the essence of what students experienced when they visited Student Services. The ultimate purpose of this study is to identify areas of strength and improvement for the processes that occur in Student Services such as financial aid counseling, personal counseling, academic advisement, and career services.

This paper has four sections. Section one provides a literature review of what factors contribute to student satisfaction and success and how student services can be developed and implemented. Section two describes the method of the study. The results of the study are analyzed and, finally, in the discussion the major findings are summed up with implications of the findings and possible future research directions.

Review of the Literature

Declining enrollment, growing costs, and increased competition are seemingly some of the most important issues that institutions of higher education are faced with. With the onset of these challenges, it has become essential for colleges and universities to make quality of education a top priority on various levels ranging from academic to social. In order to make this a priority, it is important for colleges to monitor how successful the services that are offered are in assisting students with the completion of their education. Students have transformed from simple education seekers to consumers who are paying a high price for a service. Student satisfaction assessments can help institutions improve programs and services, remain accountable to the student customer, and continue to be competitive in the market of higher education. Student satisfaction with student affairs departments is an important aspect to study because colleges and universities exist to educate students.

A college education provides opportunities and opens doors in order to help students not only find what they are passionate about but to obtain employment in that field. With the recent decline of the economy, the necessity for the opening of those doors of opportunity has become increasingly important. This need places an additional value on acquiring a college degree. In lieu of the increasing value, colleges are expected to respond to the needs of students and deliver services that

foster the overall growth and success of the student in order assist them with their goal of graduating. Because of their expedient nature, community colleges in particular are faced with the daunting task of furnishing individuals with skills to further their education, obtain gainful employment and enhance their overall quality of life.

With the added importance being placed on the value of a college degree, colleges and universities often make it their mission assist students with achieving their overall future goals. The importance of delivering services to students that nurture success is growing. The objective of this study is to determine student satisfaction with Student Services Center at the downtown campus of a local community college. In order to meet this objective, this study focuses on one particular question. How satisfied are students with services offered by the Student Services Center? The review of the literature discusses how student services can be developed, models of student affairs that colleges and universities can follow, and the services that are usually available to students. Finally, the idea of the student as a customer as well as student needs is discussed.

How Services Are Developed

Decker (2013) suggests that student development theories of William Perry and Robert Kegan can be helpful for colleges and universities when they are constructing ways to facilitate student success (2013). William Perry's student development theory builds upon Piaget's cognitive development theory, which says that children develop cognitive skills in four stages: (1) the sensory-motor stage (ages 0-2) (2) the pre-operational stage (age 2-7) (3) the concrete-operational stage (ages 7-12) and (4) the formal-operational stage (age 12+). Perry's theory consists of nine positions that describe the steps through which students move from a simplistic view of the world to a more complex view. The nine positions are separated into four categories: dualism, multiplicity, relativism and commitment. The dualism stage contains positions one and two. In position one, all problems

are solvable. In position two, it is important for students to understand that while “authorities” (those who have the right answers) may disagree, there is still one right answer. Students in the dualism stage are staunch in their belief that there is one simple answer to all questions. The expectation in this stage can be that professors deliver these answers. During the multiplicity stage, there are conflicting answers and students begin to trust their inner voice more. Position three is early multiplicity where students become aware that there are solutions that are known and unknown and the task is to figure out how to find the right solution. In position four of Perry’s theory, everyone either has a right to their own opinion or students begin to recognize that some problems are unsolvable, thereby rendering the solution unimportant. Perry theorizes that at this point students can often retreat to a “safer” position where the answers are clearer. Positions five and six are housed within the relativism stage. In position five, all solutions are validated by reasons. In position six, students begin to see the necessity of making choices and committing to a solution. In the commitment stage of Perry’s theory, position seven entails the student making a commitment, position eight allows the student to fully experience the implications of that commitment, and position nine involves the student realizing that commitment is a continuous and ongoing activity.

The commonality between Perry and Kegan’s theories is the concept of progression. Both theories move from an initial view of the world as having a single truth that exists on an external level to more complex levels where learners are able to recognize their ability to recognize their own truths. Both theorists suggest that the greatest potential to affect college students’ development is in the transitions between positions. Robert Kegan’s theory of development suggests that as individuals grow from babies into adults, they develop the ability to view the world more objectively (1998). He outlines these five stages of progression: (1) incorporative (2) impulsive (3) imperial (4) interpersonal and (5) institutional. A true sense of self has not been established in the incorporative

stage and in the subsequent stage of impulsive, the child does not see others as “independent creatures.” Kegan postulates that at this stage, the individual “becomes” their needs. During the imperial stage that follows, the individual becomes aware of his/her needs while also recognizing that they are not defined by them. In the interpersonal stage, the individual becomes aware of the needs of others. In the institutional stage, the individual becomes more committed to values and beliefs.

Decker postulates that both theories recognize that developmentally, individuals start off believing that there is one external truth and eventually transition to a point where they start to recognize and embrace their ability to author their own truth. Both theorists suggest that the way to affect the development of college students is for practitioners to recognize where students currently are and encourage them to move on to the next level. For Perry’s theory, this transition is between positions four and five and for Kegan’s theory it happens between orders three and four.

Community colleges are faced with providing services for students with various academic and background characteristics. Many students are often in periods of transition as they return to school. Decker surmises that this is the time for college personnel to assist them with transition to more complex ways of thinking. This involves validating their current level but encouraging them to move to the next. To ease the transition, it’s crucial that community colleges provide enough support activities and services.

Schulz and Szekeres (2008) insist that the development of service provision be more compatible to the institution’s organizational structure and budgetary and physical limitations. The authors state that developers of service provisions should take these constraints into account rather than create a formulaic process for how services are provided. There are certain “principles” that should inform how services are provided. The first principle is to start with the customers (identified

as the students) in mind. This principle should be adhered to because it ensures that all processes and provisions will take into account the needs of the student. The second principle is that students are capable of autonomy and can access many services through self-service with additional support as needed from staff members. Another principle described is that of integrity and consistency for administrative services by providing a single service point for information and services that match accountability with responsibility. It's also important to reduce double handling and minimize the number of people involved processes and to design information technology systems to take account of this. The authors also designate a principle of being explicit about service outcomes for staff working in service areas to both staff and students receiving these services. The authors assert that based on their experiences, those principles will help to provide a framework for how colleges and universities make decisions about improvement and focusing people's attention on the goals of service delivery.

Consistent in the literature is the idea that silos can be counterproductive. Most colleges and universities separate academic and student support functions into separate units. Schulz and Szekeres (2008) note that this approach is fragmented and that there needs to be a focus on bridging the gap between the two functions.

Student Affairs Models

Two models that administrators can use to decide upon how services will be implemented are the student-centered model and academic collaboration model. Flanagan discusses ways for student affairs professionals to increase retention and student satisfaction. Based on Vincent Tinto's theory of student engagement (1987), Flanagan outlines three principles that can be used when building a comprehensive student affairs program (2006) and proposes the Student Life and Retention Model. This model takes into consideration three key principles. First, the integration of academic and social

takes time for students. It can take up to two or more years for some students. Second, the needs and challenges of students must be identified and taken into consideration when developing programs, policies, and strategies to address these needs. This is especially important during the first two years. Third, as students grow, develop, and move toward graduation, their needs and challenges will change and they may have different expectations of their college institution.

In the student-centered model, student affairs professionals should begin by becoming well acquainted with the mission and learning goals of the institution. In addition, student affairs must have an understanding of what kind of students are attending and graduating. It is suggested that student affairs collaborates with institutional research programs to procure data that will be useful in informing the decision making and planning process. For example, if the research indicates that a large percentage of students are diagnosed with learning disabilities then it would be appropriate to develop learning centers and tutorial programs to support students.

Vital to this model is the idea that there needs to be a strong relationship between academic and student affairs departments. Students who feel connected to their institution both academically and socially are more likely to graduate (2006). Student affairs professionals should strive for integration between the two divisions. Students who choose a college because the academic program fulfills their intellectual and career goals are searching for academic integration. Joining academic integration with finding enjoyable friendships, out-of-class experiences, and services ensures social integration. When both of these needs are met, students are more likely to persist to graduation.

Before the early 1900s, the concept of separate academic and student affairs did not exist (Colwell, 2006). What is now viewed as student affairs was then seen as a part of a whole, single educational experience. In the academic collaboration model, student services professionals must become partners in order to serve the student community effectively. This partnership does not

simply mean simple collaboration. Colwell states that “they must be colleagues with shared values, goals, and language, committed to creating a single cohesive educational environment and experience for each student” (2006, p. 34).

Four primary categories of reasons for academic and student affairs collaboration are identified: (1) philosophical, which considers student learning as a shared institutional priority; (2) environmental, an institutional environment with a tradition of collaboration; (3) managerial, the many tasks and linking issues addressed jointly; and (4) political, with institutional leadership advocating close student and academic affairs partnerships. Colwell discusses the academic and student affairs relationship at small colleges from these four perspectives.

Student learning and success is the common philosophical ground area for the partnership between academic and student affairs. The centrality of the focus of student learning is clearly evident for academic affairs. All academic resources, such as classrooms and libraries, focus on student learning. The niche of student affairs, however, has changed over the past seventy years (Colwell, 2006). In the past the role of student affairs has been to support the student so that they can accomplish their academic and intellectual goals. Currently there is more of an emphasis on the idea that facilitating student learning encompasses fostering the success of the social, emotional, physical, spiritual, and vocational, as well as intellectual goals of the student. Rather than simply supporting the academic mission, student affairs professionals are also educators, “the faculty for the nonacademic classroom.” Colwell defines the philosophical foundation of the academic and student affairs relationship with learning principles and states that a significant academic and student affairs partnership has particular importance in a small college because small colleges have learning environments that are so “developmentally powerful”. The principle that learning occurs through interactions and opportunities for involvement suggests that the student at the less populated small

campus, with a small student-faculty ratio and small class sizes, will have more frequent and more intense interactions, and consequently more learning. A strong relationship between academic and student affairs will be necessary to ensure that student learning occurs.

The relationship between academic and student affairs can also be defined by the overall environment of the institution. Because of the small size, community colleges can make a close, collaborative relationship between student services and academic affairs even more likely and important. Colwell states that at small schools, students, faculty, and staff are more likely to feel that they are part of an “intimate personal community of learners” that considers the entire individual. For both academic and student affairs staff, this environment helps to support mutual working relationships and encourages the opportunity to participate together in the growth and learning of students.

Available Services

Different methods have been developed for delivering services to students. Services that are typically offered by colleges and universities are admissions, orientation, assessment, advising, financial aid, tutoring, and support activities. While community colleges offer these services and programs to students to support their success, these services are often underutilized. According to Richman et al. (2013), this is a national issue at community colleges and isn't isolated to just Prince George's Community College (PGCC). PGCC decided to ensure students were aware of these services by creating a literal map which describes how students can achieve graduation.

Miami Dade College (MDC) faculty use an electronic progress system to keep students apprised of their academic status. Harrison (2013) writes that the idea behind this initiative is that students will be notified via email that they are not making expected progress in a course and are then encouraged to respond by taking advantage of some of the support services that faculty offer

such as office hours, tutoring services, academic advisement or mentoring. Students have presented with issues such as low income, income management and childcare needs. Students can also take advantage of MDC's "Single Stop" services which address issues such as access to food, cash assistance, childcare, free legal and financial counseling, and free tax preparation.

Students are not accessing these services on their own, however, according to Kleinglass (2013). To optimize the benefit to students, MDC devised the Roadmap to Completion initiative, which combines the efforts of student affairs, specifically advising and academic affairs. The Roadmap pilot begins with participation of the faculty members who used the academic progress alert system, which then generated reports that were distributed to the advisement and career services department. The departments then would contact students who were not making satisfactory progress via technology or in person communication. The purpose of this contact was to offer advisement and referrals to help students identify and address both their academic struggles as well as any life issues they were experiencing. The Roadmap pilot was successful in addressing both academic and personal issues and reinforcing MDC's student learning outcomes by helping students complete an individualized education plan. Students were also able to receive a referral for tutoring, information on internships and student organizations. Harrison asserts that this collaborative effort shows the extent to which institutions of higher education should go to create meaningful ways to remove the silos that can often exist between student affairs and academic affairs. Ultimately, the dismantling of these silos will allow the focus to remain student centered.

In the interest of remaining student centered, it's important to recognize the impact that technology has had on higher education. Kleinglass (2005) found that today's college students consider the Internet an invaluable tool for their educational experience. Students demonstrate the impact of technology each day by using technology tools to communicate with family, friends, and

college professors, to complete classroom requirements, for entertainment; and to enhance their overall personal and social learning experiences.

Kleemann (2005) discusses the evolution of web services and describes how services such as fee payment, parking renewal, registration, career services, and personal counseling were traditionally delivered to the student customer by having the student physically come to the place of the service to receive it. Kleemann suggests that this often meant long lines or advanced planning such as appointments for students seeking these services. With the advances of technology and the accessibility of the Internet, student affairs divisions now have the ability to become more student-centered by connecting and providing these services using an avenue that is more convenient for them. Kleemann also asserts that if an organization endeavors to become more student-centric, it must employ the tools of future such as technology.

The way that technology can be used to ensure a positive experience for students needs to be intentional, however. Kleemann (2005) provides an example of a traditional organizational chart and describes how in the traditional models of higher education services are delivered in person and each office is accountable for a single area. This is known as a functional silo. While on paper this organizational structure may seem neatly arranged, in many cases it results in specialized staff in each department unable to provide a holistic service to students due to limited coordination and communication between departments. As a result, students can get bounced from office to office. Students are best served by weaving silos that normally separate academic and service units. It is imperative to consider this when creating online services. The “runaround” is an experience that students often encounter. If the web services that students are asked to use is organized in compartmentalized sections, the “runaround experience can also happen virtually. One example of a functional silo in online student services is the idea of having multiple usernames and passwords to

log on to multiple systems. If the groups creating and maintaining the website do not communicate with each other, each department's section may look different with navigation links in different places. A web silo can have a student initiating a certain process online (such as ordering a book) but having to complete the process (paying for the book) in person. Kleemann states that higher education should be moving from a service based perspective to an experience based point of view and that this move requires giving students access to services across functional units. It's clear that in order to truly serve students well, the website must encompass the entire institution and provide a full range of services.

Challenges do exist for providing integrated web services for students (Kleinglass, 2005). One is that there needs to be a shift in the way that student affairs professionals perceive online student service delivery and the role they play within the institution. Kleinglass asserts that student affairs professionals need to eliminate the apprehension they have related to technology by evaluating and understanding the influence, function, and role of technology and how it can positively affect student learning (2005). Student affairs staff can then begin to influence and guide the role of technology within student affairs when they can articulate how technology influences outcomes, actions, expectations, and student behaviors. This information can then be provided to guide administrators in making effective decisions that positively affect retention, use of resources, and the student experience.

Currently, most student services online sites are based on the organizational structure of the university with the content displayed in functional silos (Kleemann, 2005). The thinking needs to shift to the idea that online student services is a "developing community and managing customer relationships" (Kleemann, 2005). Information and interaction on the student website should be organized and delivered from the perspective of the student and personalized with information that

will be useful for students. Ideally, a student who has just been accepted to the institution will be able to use the website to schedule an in-person meeting with an academic advisor, apply for financial aid, and explore housing options without having to explore several different websites. The idea behind this is accessibility and much of what is done today can be done in an automated process and will free up student affairs professionals to work directly with students on issues that cannot be handled electronically.

Another challenge is an institution-wide shared, broad vision of what web services will encompass. This will require support from top leadership on campus and this is also where student affairs can advocate for student needs and desires. Student affairs is often the division of the university that is most concerned with student views and issues and student affairs professionals can help articulate these needs to administrators in the institution. Once the shift in thinking about the role of online student services and the broad vision of the site is developed, the next challenge is to come up with a way to implement it. Kleemann (2005) states that often institutions of higher education will default to another functional unit to complete this task such as “Office of Web Management” but suggests that should be avoided:

The problem, of course, is that such a structure rarely works. To manage horizontally—to weave the functional vertical silos of the brick-and-mortar campus into a seamless web—what is needed is a mixed model of cooperation and control—decentralized centralization (p. 97).

Organizing to carry out the vision involves developing a cross functional web management development team. The team should consist of members with skills such as graphics, public relations, branding skill sets and content knowledge. The team should be led by someone who has an understanding of the culture, history, business processes, support services, and academic traditions

of the institution. It is also essential for the institute of higher education to purchase a user friendly content management system. With a quality content management system, the platform to perform updates to the website is completely accessible through any standard Web browser and is easy to learn. This means that designated person in each functional silo would not need any programming experience to update the website. Each academic department or functional unit would have the ability to log on to an administrative section through their internet browser. A more advanced level of content management would consist of additional features such as content approval prior to posting, content expiration notification, and the ability to upload and maintain photos and graphics. The entire process would result in a more centralized and personalized experience for students.

Students as Customers

Education costs money and students pay these rising costs to have a service provided to them. It seems crucial then to examine whether thinking of the services provided by student services can be considered “customer service” and if this line of thinking will lead to a better educational experience for the student. Behind the idea that colleges and universities are bestowed with the task of providing students with services to foster their success, emerges the idea of students as customers. Despite the responsibility that community colleges have to meet the needs of students, Maguad (2012) posits that often institutions of higher education are reluctant to consider themselves “customer-driven”. Customer-centered organizations are focused on the needs of the customer and satisfying those needs. Maguad states that it stands to reason that the overall future financial success of college and universities depends on their ability to pinpoint, anticipate, and ultimately serve the needs of their customers. Maguad also discusses how companies have adopted a “customer-driven definition of quality” by which both identifying the customer and what expectations they may have is essential to customer satisfaction. Despite this finding, institutions of higher education are still

unlikely to refer to students as customers because many faculty members feel threatened by the idea that students are “customers of the educational process.” Small (2008) posits that staff have the perception that their relationship with students is based more in an ongoing than the transaction-based approach typical of customer service in a commercial business.

Small (2008) expands on the analysis of the “customer” in higher education by considering the concept of student service staff as both servicing customers, and as the internal customers of academic and other general staff. Small argues that there is a perception that students are acting increasingly as “customers” because of the rising costs of higher education. Students who have experienced increases in the costs of attendance often feel entitled to proportionate increases in the levels of service they receive. Despite students identifying as customers, student services staff in a study conducted by Small were still reluctant to identify them as customers. The term “customer” was said to carry negative commercial connotations that implied that the basis of each interaction was financial, when staff perceived their relationship with students as being altruistic. Though student services staff may be reluctant to perceive students as customers, this perception will improve retention rates by forcing the focus to be on the customer.

However, just as it is important for any organization to recognize its customers, it is also necessary for colleges and universities to establish a way to document accountability for customer satisfaction. Akbariyeh (2012) writes that customer satisfaction and service quality are crucial factors in the analysis of competitors. If students are seen as customers, then other colleges and universities are the competition. It seems important then that attention is paid service quality. Obtaining customer satisfaction should be a critical factor in an organization’s goals.

Student Needs

What factors influence a student to either drop out of school or continue until they have achieved their goal of graduation? Factors such as age, ethnicity, past academic performance, financial status, and registration behaviors are all factors that affect student persistence (Nakajima, Dembo, and Mossler 2012). Recently, it has become evident that student services are also associated with student persistence. Brock (2010) poses that students arrive at college unknowledgeable about what needs to be done to achieve their goals. Students need assistance with everything from figuring out which courses they have to take, how to register for classes and apply for financial aid, and what social resources they can use to help them during this period of transition. Brock postulates that as students progress through their college career, they may need help resolving personal or academic problems that hinder their goals.

What can be done to ensure that students are receiving the help that they may need? Culp (2005) writes that it's important for student affairs practitioners to use resources allocated to them more effectively to meet the needs of today's students. In terms of traditional student support services like advising, assessment, counseling, orientation and student activities, there is a great need to focus on encouraging the pursuit of higher education, transforming applicants into successful students, connecting students to their school and helping them to make sense of their experiences and promoting autonomy.

Culp writes that the process of encouraging the attainment of a college degree begins with connecting with the K-12 system. Austin Community College (ACC) is used as an example for this collaboration between the community college and school district. ACC counselors and advisers are chosen and assigned to high schools that reside in the area and will designate specific times to visit the school. ACC's counseling and advising staff assist high school students with test preparation, career guidance as well as conduct workshops to help students and their parents understand the

importance of higher education, the admissions and financial aid process. Parents are also given workshops on how they can contribute to the success of their children in college.

The Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) in Maryland is also given as an example of how student affairs can partner with high schools to help prepare students for college. Staff at CCBC administer the Accuplacer, which is the College Board's placement testing, to high school sophomores and juniors during a half-day visit to a CCBC campus. During the half-day visit, students are given a tour of the campus as well as information about the college itself. High school counselors use the results of the Accuplacer results to determine college readiness of students and respond accordingly. CCBC also offers dual enrollment, which allows high school students to enroll in college classes, and arranges campus events that help high school students explore their career goals.

Culp also discusses the importance of student affairs partnering with the community to serve as “champions, mentors, and advocates” of the community college's programs. Culp writes that partnerships with the community can lead to scholarships, jobs, internships, and mentoring programs for students and can help encourage them to finish high school education and continue their education in community college. For example, affiliation with existing networks in the community such as churches, service organizations, and tribal groups serving large African-American, Hispanic, or Native American populations can help provide contact information, and support to students and their families.

Culp (2005) proposes that the most important part of identifying what these personal and academic impediments are is through an institution-wide commitment to “entry, exit, and classroom assessment”. According to Culp, no one knows students and their needs and fears as well as student affairs practitioners and that it will be helpful for them to collaborate with faculty to design

assessment and placement models that can be implemented to transform applicants into successful students.

Seven steps are outlined for how this transformation can be accomplished. Step one stresses the importance of helping faculty realistically pinpoint the skills that students need upon entry and exit for every course or program of study. Culp states that student affairs staff can help faculty gather and analyze data needed to make these decisions as well as develop models to test alternative approaches and understand the consequences associated with each model. The overall goal is to establish realistic entry and exit learning competencies. Step two states that because student affairs professionals have extensive knowledge of student development and assessment, they can collaborate with faculty to devise models that employ a variety of techniques to determine information such as which classes students should take, the support services they will need, their performance in a specific class, their progress toward educational and career goals, their satisfaction with instruction and services, and their readiness to graduate, transfer or enter the work market (2005). Step three acknowledges that the assessment process is stressful, but Culp positions that student affairs practitioners have the ability to design programs aimed at stress reduction. Student affairs can also offer optional workshops in anxiety management and test preparation. Explaining to students the purpose of assessment and how the results are used can also be helpful to students. Step three outlines the importance of using the assessment results as well as a student's educational background to help student's choose their first semester classes and describe what faculty will expect from them. Step four states that while placement testing is effective at assessing a student's starting point, it is important for student affairs professionals to take into account high school and college preparation, work and life experiences and years out of school. Culp suggests that student affairs work with faculty to validate student placement during the first week of classes. Step five describes

how student affairs practitioners can use placement tests results and student self-assessments to identify the support services each student needs, to help students design a support service plan that guides course selection, and to encourage students to follow that plan. Simply the interest that the student affairs professional shows in the student and reinforcing the need to utilize those services when needed can make an impact. Step six suggests that student affairs division collaborate with institutional research boards in order to make reports of assessment data more accessible and easy to read. One example given is that students and their advisors need to know what course and support services the college urges them to take, how the college developed these recommendations, and what the next steps are if the recommendation seems valid or if they do not agree with it. Step seven states that course placement and data analysis are a continuous development that must regularly be reviewed by faculty as well as student affairs professionals to ensure the effectiveness of the mode; as it relates to class completion rates, students' performance in higher level courses, and retention and graduation rates.

Another student service that presents a growing need is personal counseling. According to Mier, Boone, and Shropshire (2009), the number of students with severe psychological problems has increased. Students are presenting with issues such as depression, suicidal ideation, and sexual assault. As a result, counseling centers have noted a growing demand for counseling services (Smith, et al., 2007). The authors also note high profile cases of students with mental illness harming themselves and state that these cases have drawn attention to the mental health needs of college students and the service delivery of mental health counseling on campus. The rise in distress levels among college students can be attributed to many issues such as developmental changes, parental, and cultural pressures and expectations and financial stressors. The authors also observe that racial minorities and international students may also experience their own unique pressures in addition to

the aforementioned issues. Ethnic minorities can face racial discrimination and international students can face emotional difficulty from the process of adjusting to a new educational format, learning in a new language, and acclimating to new social interaction styles. The authors state that counseling services are often underutilized, however. Outreach programs to raise awareness and reach students who may not be aware of counseling services on campus is one way to increase the use of these services. Outreach can be defined as psychoeducation where students are presented with information on time management, suicide prevention, anxiety and other concerns they may have (2007).

Understanding student experience and satisfaction with student services is an essential step for college and universities to work towards improving service delivery. It stands to reason that if students report high levels of satisfaction with their university, they will be more successful as students. Increasingly, institutions of higher education are realizing that education is a business and that it has become necessary to meet student needs to their satisfaction. There are many aspects that colleges and universities can take into account when devising ways to ensure student satisfaction. These aspects include understanding and assessing the school's mission statement, examining how services are developed. Student affairs models and how they can be implemented are also important to consider as well as the available services offered, and how these services can meet student needs. If the goal of institutions of higher education is to foster the academic, social and career success of students, then they must become service oriented and continue to assess the satisfaction students have with current policies and how they perceive their college experience.

Research has been done to assess the overall satisfaction students have with their college or university, however, much of the recent research is quantitative in method. The research has indicated that colleges and universities employ many different strategies to ensure that students are successful such as collaborating with faculty, creating a more student-centered culture and providing

“one-stop” services to minimize the “run around” experience that students often experience. A large part of the research also focuses particularly on four-year educational institutions. This study will add a qualitative value to research at a community college and allow the reader to fully understand how students perceive and experience student services at a local community college. Student satisfaction assessments can help institutions improve programs and services, remain accountable to the student customer, and continue to be competitive in the market of higher education. In order to assess how well a local community college has been at providing student satisfaction, this study attempts to answer one question: How satisfied are students with services offered by the Student Services department at a local community college? The purposes of the following section are to explain the sample selection, describe the instrument and to provide an explanation for the procedures used to collect the data.

Method

Participants

This study utilized a convenience sample. Ten participants were selected based on having at least one visit with Student Services in the fall 2013 semester. The researcher decided to only invite ten students to participate in a focus group based on the qualitative nature of the study. Participants were all currently enrolled students at the local community college where the study was held. Participants were excluded from participating if they worked with or were associated with Student Services in any way (for example, student leaders).

Instrumentation

Seven open-ended questions were developed based on the results of a survey distributed to students via email in February of 2014 (see Appendix A). The questions were created based on

categories that were outlined in the results of the survey, namely, perceived environment, knowledge of counselors and staff regarding the student issues, ease of access to office areas and computers, availability of supplemental information and materials such as referrals to other departments within the college or outside community resources, confidentiality, professionalism, and counselor and staff response to any questions students had. The data representing responses to the seven open-ended questions were collected in a focus group. The researcher only asked additional questions when a participant did not understand or needed further clarification on the meaning or context of a question.

Procedures

A download of the walk-in database of Student Services was done and the student identification numbers were uploaded to a spreadsheet to correspond with a valid email address. Survey questions were then emailed to students (see Appendix B). It was mentioned in the email that participation was voluntary. A total of 1,106 emails were sent and 110 responded, yielding a response rate of 9.9% (Appendix C). The day of the focus group the researcher stood outside of the student lounge and asked students if they had visited Student Services in the fall 2013 semester. If the student said yes, she or he was invited to participate in a focus group. Out of the 15 students asked to participate, the first ten who met the criteria for the study were invited to the focus group. The researcher reiterated that participation was voluntary. To encourage student participation lunch was provided during the focus group. The focus group met in a conference room outside of Student Services and the researcher served as the facilitator. The focus group lasted approximately one hour, and participants were asked seven interview questions. Appropriate permission was obtained from participants in writing to authorize the audio recording of the focus group. The consent form contained a brief description of the study, the rights of the participants, information about

confidentiality, an explanation of risks and potential discomfort, and an opportunity to decline participation (see Appendix D). The tape of the focus group was transcribed. Files of the transcription were kept in a password-protected computer that only the researcher had access to. Files were deleted once the study was completed. The tape of the focus group was also destroyed to maintain participant confidentiality.

Results

This study used inductive analysis to examine the data from the focus group. This approach involves discovering patterns, themes, and categories in one's data. The audiotape recording of the focus group was transcribed using word processing software. Once the transcription was completed, the text was read in detail so that the researcher could gain an understanding of the content and become familiar with emerging patterns or "themes" that were present. The researcher then identified and defined broad categories that focused on major recurring responses. Descriptive codes, which summarized the primary topic of the each response, were then created. A miscellaneous category was created for responses that appeared to be outliers or were infrequently mentioned. Results from the miscellaneous category were later reexamined to determine if they fit in with any other category. Some responses addressed more than one category and were subsequently placed into each of the categories they addressed. The twelve categories that emerged were later reduced to nine categories with some of the smaller categories being merged with similar ones. For example, two of the twelve categories that emerged were "information" and "assistance provided." It became difficult to fit other responses neatly into those categories, however. A more encompassing and meaningful category of "experiences while accessing services" was created to describe the student experience. Finally, the researcher searched for subtopics within each category, including

conflicting points of view and new perceptions. Appropriate quotes that expressed the core “theme” or essence of each category were selected. Four themes were ultimately chosen from the data.

The analysis yielded four major themes that described the experience of students with Student Services and discussed their satisfaction with services. The major themes identified were exceeding expectations, relationships with faculty and staff, consistency of experience of services across campuses, and knowledge and demeanor of faculty and staff. The themes were then summarized and reinforced with direct quotes from participants.

Exceeding Expectations

For a large number of participants in the focus group, faculty and staff at Student Services were willing to go “above and beyond” in order to assist students with achieving their educational and personal goals. Participants indicated that assistance provided by faculty and staff oftentimes exceeded their expectations of what they perceive a college counselor, advisor or administrator is required to do. For example, one student stated this of his experience when he was suspended from the college after a physical altercation with another student:

A couple of days later I got a letter in the mail stating that the Dean of Students wanted to see me. I don’t know if she wanted to see both of us but she wanted to see me. I went to her office. Head of security was there; she was there. They said normally on campus – if you’re fighting – done. So but they allowed me to come back that January. But when I came back I got an invitation to lunch with her and security, the head guy, so that was my first experience with Student Services. So from that point on, I really like the atmosphere cause they gave me another chance.

Another student supported the claim of students and faculty exceeding expectations:

When I lost my mother back in 2011, I remember all I could do is sit upstairs on the 6th floor and I was just crying my eyes out and one of the counselors happened to be coming down the stairs to go to the café. Well, he heard me crying and he talked to me and everything and actually drove me to the hospital to say my final goodbyes to my mother.

Another student described the measures faculty and staff were willing to take in a similar manner:

I was in a bad situation finding placement for Human Services because a certain place that I was looking at—the individual that worked there that was setting it up for me, he's no longer there. So now I'm stuck in the middle and I didn't have any placement. So I spoke to one of the advisors in Student Services. You could do whatever you do in class but if you don't get your field work hours for this class, you fail – end of discussion. So I spoke to her, I always go talk to her; she helps me, shows me which classes I need and makes sure that I don't take any unnecessary classes. And I told her the situation and she says "I'm gonna get back with you. I don't have nothing right now, I don't know of anything right now," and to me I feel like she went above and beyond because she came to the class and looked for me like a week later and said "Yo, I got you. Didn't I tell you I was gonna remember?" She found placement for me at Rochester City School District and I was like "wow, that's what's up." It was better than what I was looking at, as far as being the low man on the totem pole, now I'm scratching and scrounging and she found placement for me that kinda put me up there and you know, that was a blessing.

Relationships

Many participants commented on the strength of the personal connection and relationships they made with several staff members at Student Services. Several participants indicated that they felt a personal connection with one or more of the professional staff members at Student Services. For example, one participant stated:

A lot of people on this campus, when it comes to a certain advisor, they love her. To the point that I remember a couple of weeks ago, maybe last month. When nobody else will do nothing for you in Student Services, and I mean all the way up to the dean, after you exhausted everything and you've gone to the dean, you can go back to this advisor and she will stop what she's doing – and make it happen.

Another participant also stated:

It's to the point that they will give you their personal cellphone number and will actually call you on Saturday and make sure that you are ok. That's the kind of relationship they have with you. What person you know, that works Monday – Friday will take their work home on Saturday, the day that they got a moment to themselves and their family and will pick up the phone 8AM, 9AM in the morning and tell you "I was thinking about you. I just wanted to know how you were doing." Even sometimes invite you to church. Will come and pick you up and take you to church just to build that connection with you. That's what this advisor represents on this campus and what Student Services is and should always be. I respect her 100%.

Another student described a similar experience:

I personally love everyone upstairs. I think the school picked some great people to work up there. I have a personal connection with a couple of the advisors. My schedule was messed up one time and this one advisor, he pulled some strings and fixed it for me. I was so happy.

One particular counselor I have a connection with – I love everybody. Especially in those personal situations. Yesterday this girl walked into the office and just broke down crying. And an advisor and the other young lady that works in the office next to her picked her off the floor and brought her in the back. They just started talking to her. They have more of a personal connection with students. It's more than just an "ID number." It's more than that, it's more hands-on. It's crazy cause we grown (laughs). We grown so for them to take time out of their own personal day, I'm really thankful for that.

Of the five participants who shared on their relationships with professional staff in Student Services, three indicated that they felt that the retention rate for some of the advisors could use improvement by stating the following:

The issue I have with Student Services is not the services that they provide, but it's the connection and the relationship is not sustainable. There's been many advisors that have come to this campus, that have taught, that we've got a lot of connections with. For instance, there was one advisor who was an outstanding person on this campus that helped start a lot of these clubs that helped get a lot of these African-American and Latino males onto this campus. They just dropped him like a hot potato. Another Hispanic one – they dropped her like a hot potato. And these are people that we can relate to.

Another participant agreed by stating:

It's a high turnover rate because either the people are hired by grants that run out and you get this connection with them and then all of a sudden they're telling you "uh, I'm leaving." It's like "well, wait, we just built this relationship, we just got started." And then the next thing you know it's this totally different person. And you have to try and establish this relationship

with them. But they got this wall built up because it's a brand new job to them so they want to seem professional to the point where they don't personalize nothing. It's generic. It's synthetic. It's just not real.

A third participant simply stated, "There are services that could stand to be improved, but my only true issue is, stop firing them so fast!"

Five participants indicated that though they feel comfortable going to all professional staff when they need assistance, several felt more comfortable with people of color when it came to discussing certain issues. For example:

Some of the counselors are great people, don't get me wrong, but sometimes the skin tone does not help the situation. Sometimes it makes you feel like they won't understand or they can't relate to what you're going through. The folks of color, they're people that I can say have been in our shoes once before. They understand.

Consistency of Experience of Services across Campuses

Participants in the focus group indicated that they felt that there was a significant difference in their experience when they attended Student Services at the downtown campus versus accessing services at the main campus. One participant said this:

This campus seems like a ghetto campus, like a high school. If you go out to Brighton and you talk to some people at Brighton, they say "Oh you go to that ratchet campus." But Student Services here they're more personable. Unlike the other campus Student Services.

Another participant shared a comparable experience when making a comparison between accessing services at both campuses:

The experience I had from this campus vs. the other campus is that they're all stuck up. You say that you're attending this campus and they act like they don't want to help you. And as far as here I have had a couple of interactions with Student Services and to me it's astronomical. Any confusion or misunderstanding that I may have had in the services or what I was looking for, I found here. It's personal.

Another student agreed:

One of the counselors here makes sure that I'm on my studies. He's talked to my professors to make sure that if I fall behind, he's right there on my ass to put a fire under it. It's that kind of push that this campus provides because it's smaller and the people that we have we see more often. It's not a big, large campus with 10, 12 different buildings and you gotta go to different buildings to get help and when you go to these different buildings these people are so stuck up that they don't even help you. It's not personal help; it's different when it's a personal approach to your situation than a generic approach that they'll do for somebody else.

Knowledge and Demeanor Faculty/Staff

Participants gave mixed reviews on staff knowledge regarding their issues and staff disclosure on how processes worked. One participant indicated that staff was very knowledgeable every single time she visited Student Services, regardless of what services she was utilizing. According to one participant, "any confusion or misunderstanding that I may have had in the services or what I was looking for I've gotten answers." Another indicated that she was asked to

return to see an advisor after she went to Registration and Financial Services and was told by staff there that there was a problem with her scheduled classes:

I messed up my schedule one time; we were just under the assumption that if we switched this one class, I'd be fine. I went over next door and talk to Financial Aid and they was like "oh no." But I couldn't do it. It had changed my account and locked me out and it said that I needed a pin from an advisor. The advisor ended up pulling some strings and like re-did my schedule for me.

Another participant also indicated approval of the knowledge of staff by sharing the following:

With Student Services, I've had a lot of help with academic counseling. I want to become fluent in Spanish. And one of the advisors told me—you might as well go take Rosetta's Stone because you're not going to become fluent in Spanish by taking the classes that we offer.

Many participants commented on the demeanor and attitude of some of the professional staff at Student Services and indicated that they affected their experiences. In reference to the experience he has had with new staff members, one participant stated:

It's like they don't want to show feelings. This is Human Services so you know. They serving the community, serving people, so you're supposed to have empathy; you're supposed to have compassion. You're supposed to help people in their time. So when you got somebody that thinks it's just about business, it's like hold on, time out for that. Your business is to make sure that I get properly accommodated so that I can get this education. Some people they just forget it, they just think about themselves and a paycheck. It's almost like you gotta prove yourself to them. I'm like what I gotta prove, I'm trying to tell you what's going on and this is why I'm coming at you.

One participant indicated that she had a negative experience with Student Services due to the demeanor of the staff member she was working with:

I think, you know, I don't think a person should be in a position that they clearly don't want. That's just me. And unfortunately, when I need personal help and attention, I come here to this campus. When I need professional help, I go to the other campus. They're right on it. There's no attitude. The guy upstairs, I felt like I was asking him about his money when I was talking about mine.

In order to ensure the reliability of the study, the researcher requested feedback from two of the ten focus group participants on the data interpretation. Both participants were asked to participate in a member check group session. Participants were shown the transcription, categories and themes of the study and each indicated that they felt that the research interpretation accurately reflected their experiences. The results of the survey sent to students prior to the focus group also serves as another form of data that can be used to confirm the credibility of this study.

Discussion

This study was done to determine how satisfied students are with the Student Services Center at a local community college. Based on the results of the focus group and the survey that was sent out via email, students indicated that they are generally satisfied with the department of Student Services. Participants indicated that they believed that professional staff were willing to go above and beyond to support them in being successful students. Participants also agreed that one of the strengths of Student Services is the quality of the relationship and the personal connection that they feel with staff members. Another recurring theme that emerged was the differences in the experiences that they had when they accessed services at the other campus of the community college

from where this study was held. The knowledge of staff and their demeanor while providing services were also identified as common themes among participants and identified as areas that could use improvement. The clearest finding from the present research confirms the existing research by Nakajima et al., (2012), which indicates that in terms of traditional student support services like advising, assessment, counseling, orientation and student activities, there is a great need to focus on encouraging the pursuit of higher education, transforming applicants into successful students, connecting students to their school, and helping them to make sense of their experiences and promoting autonomy.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation to the study is the small sample size. Though there were only ten participants, due to the qualitative nature of the study the sample size was sufficient. Another limitation was the lack of additional focus groups. Supplementary focus groups that concentrate specifically on the more frequently used services such as personal counseling, financial aid, and academic advisement could have been more reflective of the student experience with Student Services. Due to time constraints, additional focus groups were not possible.

Program Recommendations

Students indicated that they often felt that professional staff was limited by administrators in terms of how extensive they could be with the assistance they provided to students. Participants also inadvertently indicated that they are often not given full disclosure on how certain processes work in Student Services. For example, several participants indicated that while they were not given incorrect information by Registration and Financial Records, the process and expectations were not explained in depth. Additionally, participants shared that it is their perception that counselors are inundated with other tasks (such as academic advisement) that prevent them from providing

counseling services to students. Another area that students indicated was of concern was the ability of professional staff to relate to students of color regarding certain issues.

Improving retention. Participants also expressed dissatisfaction with staff retention and indicated that it causes a chasm in the bonding between staff and students. One recommendation that would improve the concerns students have with retention is for administrators and staff members to be intentional with their communication with the student body regarding the ending of a position. Transitioning students who have formed a close, working relationship with staff to a new, incoming professional will be helpful towards avoiding the aforementioned abrupt ending.

Addressing staff knowledge and demeanor. Concerns were expressed with knowledge and the demeanor of staff. One way to address this is to provide faculty and staff with extensive professional development to ensure that students are consistently treated with respect and concern for their individual needs. To achieve this, the college could develop and implement mandatory, continuing customer service training for all staff members of Student Services who have direct and frequent contact with students. An ongoing form of feedback such as a ballot box or website can be established to continuously evaluate progress.

Students also indicated that they are often unaware of how certain processes function. A workshop at the college was recently held in the form of a “speed-dating” event where different departments attended and were able to share what their duties, responsibilities, and processes were. Such an event would help to enlighten students about how each function of Student Services works on a more in-depth level. Services such as financial aid and advisement are commonly utilized. However, students expressed dissatisfaction with not knowing the full extent of the process. The college also offers a first-year student success course which teaches students about the college experience. However, the course is not required for students who achieve a certain score in the

placement testing all students are required to take. If all students were required to take such a course, they may gain a better understanding of Student Services functions. A Student Services orientation could have several benefits. Not only will students increase their knowledge of how each service in Student Services works, professional staff knowledge can be refreshed and an opportunity to create a bond with students can be created.

As evidenced in the literature by Maguad (2012), due to rising costs, education seekers now pay a high price to have a service provided to them. It seems important then to think of the student as a customer and to provide exceptional “customer service” if this line of thinking will lead to a better educational experience for the student. Students indicated that the demeanor of staff when accessing certain services like financial aid and disability services was often unpleasant. Professional development for staff on customer service and etiquette can assist staff with improving their demeanor while they are providing services to students.

Office of Multiculturalism. To address students expressing concern that professional staff may have difficulty relating to students of color regarding certain issues, an office on campus that deals specifically with multiculturalism should be developed. Such a department could promote diversity, inclusion, and social justice as well as create an open space for students of color to share some of their experiences. Students could receive support with dealing with the transition to college and expression of one’s voice as a member of an underrepresented population. Furthermore, additional assessment should be done to investigate why students have the perception that faculty and staff will be unable to relate to them regarding certain issues. The results from future assessments can be brought to counselors and advisors to aid them in creating a greater sense of understanding for those issues.

Future Research

There have been numerous quantitative studies done on student perceptions of student support services. A limited amount of qualitative research exists, however. Further qualitative research regarding student satisfaction will add to the existing results by providing more profound insights and from a different perspective. While the results of the study overall indicate student satisfaction with Student Services, it would be beneficial to replicate this study with a larger sample. Furthermore, it would be useful to conduct specific research on effectiveness of some of the commonly used services such as academic advisement, financial aid, and personal counseling. In addition, repeating program evaluation studies on an annual basis could eventually lead to the development of a comprehensive evaluation system that would assist this and other community colleges to constantly assess their mission statement and goals.

Conclusion

After the completion of the study, when the researcher was asked about the findings, there seemed to be a lot of interest in proposed recommendations and strategies for the improvement of Student Services. In response to the question, one student remarked to another that the college “can’t do everything” for its students. It was discovered that not enough time was dedicated to opportunities for building sustainable relationships and evaluation of services. The results of this study calls for further exploration of student needs and more frequent evaluation of services to meet those needs. The college is not asked to “do everything,” but to make intentional efforts to provide individualized and meaningful experiences for students. The results of the research indicate that students overall believe that staff is willing to go above and beyond, and that they are able to form personal connections with them. Areas such as staff knowledge and demeanor and consistency of services between campuses could use improvement, however. Following recommendations such as open communication with students, professional development to address staff knowledge and

demeanor, and establishing an Office of Multiculturalism will assist staff in supporting students so that they can ultimately be empowered to achieve their educational goals.

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Appendix A

Focus Group Questions

Introduction

Welcome and thank you for coming today!

Purpose of the focus group

- Hear about your experiences with Student Services
- Understand which processes worked and which could use improvement

Introduce Facilitator and describe role

- Ask questions
- Take notes, monitor tape recorder, ask follow-up questions and keep conversation on track

Discuss permission to record the session

- Privacy and confidentiality
- Only researcher will access audio-recording
- Transcripts only available to the researcher. Descriptors will be used instead of names in the transcript
- As I reflect and report on what you've shared, I will never share information that would allow you to be identified

Ground rules

- Everyone is encouraged to participate
- All experiences are equally valid
- There are no right or wrong answers – interested in your experiences
- Everyone's views should be heard and respected
- What is shared inside this room today will stay here
- Feel free to respond to each other so jump in if someone says something that you agree or disagree with
- Try to speak loudly and clearly and not talk at the same time as others so that we can be sure to capture your perspectives in the recording

Questions

We recently sent out a survey to students who visited Student Services in the fall 2013 semester. Students identified the types of services they received as registration, financial aid, academic advisement, personal counseling, admissions, career/transfer counseling, placement testing, bursar, EOP and disability services.

1. What has been your overall experience with Student Services?
2. Talk about the environment at Student Services. How welcoming was it?

3. What type of experiences with Student Services left you feeling as though the college served you well?
4. What type of experiences with Student Services left you feeling as though the college could have done more?
5. Talk about your experience with:
 - General quality of service that you have received
 - Information about courses, programs, and requirements through academic advisement
 - Amount of time in each session with an advisor or a counselor
6. How was your experience in terms of:
 - Staff member preparedness
 - Listening to your concerns
 - Genuine interest in you
 - Accuracy of information
 - Referral to appropriate campus resources
 - Career planning and goal setting
 - Following up with unresolved issues (callbacks, submitting additional information)
7. Tell me about services that have been helpful or unhelpful for you.

Appendix B
Student Services Customer Satisfaction Survey

1. During the fall 2013 term (September to December), how many times did you interact with the Student Services Center?
 - a) 1 to 5 times
 - b) 6 to 15 times
 - c) 16 or more times
2. What type of service did you receive? (Check all that apply)
 - ☐ Bursar
 - ☐ Registration
 - ☐ Financial Aid
 - ☐ Academic Advisement
 - ☐ Placement Testing
 - ☐ EOP
 - ☐ Admissions
 - ☐ Career/Transfer Counseling
 - ☐ Personal Counseling
 - ☐ Disability
 - ☐ Other
3. Please rate your level of satisfaction with the services you received while visiting the Student Services Center.

Very satisfied Satisfied Neutral Dissatisfied Very Dissatisfied

Welcoming and assistive environment
Ease of access to office areas and computers
Knowledge of receptionist/office staff
Knowledge of counselor/professional staff
Confidentiality of information shared
Taken care of in a professional and courteous manner
Availability of supplemental info & materials
Overall satisfaction with service
4. Was the staff able to provide the service you required?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
5. Was the staff able to answer the questions you had?
 - a) Yes
 - b) No
6. Do you have a better understanding of the particular function or policy related to your questions?
 - a) Yes




- b) No
- c) N/A

Appendix C











Survey Responses

A download of the walk-in database with student identification numbers from the Student Services center was provided. A total of 1,106 emails were sent and 110 responded, yielding a response rate of 9.9%.

1. During the fall 2013 term (September to December), how many times did you interact with the Student Services Center?

Answer		Response	%
1 to 5 times		64	59%
6 to 15 times		38	35%
16 or more times		7	6%
Total		109	100%

2. What type of service did you receive (Check all that apply)?

Answer		Response	%
Bursar		1	1%
Registration		44	40%
Financial Aid		73	66%
Academic Advisement		65	59%
Placement Testing		18	16%
EOP		10	9%
Admissions		22	20%
Career/Transfer Counseling		18	16%
Personal Counseling		15	14%
Disability		10	9%
Other		7	6%

Other

change of major

To find out why students were not emailed and notified about latex being in the building.

Information for a class

schedule

3. Please rate your level of satisfaction with the services you received while visiting while visiting the Student Services Center.

Question	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Total Responses	Mean
Welcoming and assistive environment	4 3.7%	5 4.6%	8 7.3%	41 37.6%	51 46.8%	109 100.0%	4.19
Ease of access to office areas and computers	4 3.7%	1 0.9%	7 6.5%	34 31.8%	61 57.0%	107 100.0%	4.37
Knowledge of receptionist/office staff	4 3.7%	5 4.7%	7 6.5%	38 35.5%	53 49.5%	107 100.0%	4.22
Knowledge of counselor/professional staff	5 4.7%	3 2.8%	12 11.3%	32 30.2%	54 50.9%	106 100.0%	4.20
Confidentiality of information shared	4 3.7%	1 0.9%	7 6.5%	33 30.8%	62 57.9%	107 100.0%	4.38
Taken care of in a professional and courteous manner	6 5.6%	1 0.9%	7 6.5%	36 33.3%	58 53.7%	108 100.0%	4.29
Availability of supplemental info & materials	5 4.9%	1 1.0%	10 9.7%	38 36.9%	49 47.6%	103 100.0%	4.21
Overall satisfaction with service	6 5.7%	2 1.9%	10 9.5%	35 33.3%	52 49.5%	105 100.0%	4.19

4. Was the staff able to provide the service you required?

Answer	Response	%
Yes	98	90%
No	3	3%
Comments	8	7%
Total	109	100%

Comments

I ended up calling and talking with the other campus staff

very helpful

good




I had to go to my advisor to get what I needed.

i find student services very helpful. especially on little things. what i like about the people who work their always has a smile.

very helpful.

no front desk was available and when she was there she spend more time looking on her computer than helping

5. Was the staff able to answer the questions you had?

Answer		Response	%
Yes		97	91%
No		4	4%
Comments		6	6%
Total		107	100%

Comments

sometimes it took me to see several advisors before i finally got some answers

Excellent




One staff member gave me wrong information....but that was just one incidence, but a critical component to my education.

They helped me as best as they could and were very friendly

sometimes

not really

6. Do you have a better understanding of the particular function or policy related to your questions?

Answer		Response	%
Yes		95	88%
No		5	5%
NA		8	7%
Total		108	100%

Appendix D

Consent Form & Permission to Tape

Research Study: Student Satisfaction with Student Services

Researcher Name: Natasja Rudge

What is the research?

You have been asked to participate in a research study about the experiences of students who have visited Student Services. The purpose of this study is to determine how satisfied students are with their experiences with Student Services and to investigate ways that processes can be improved.

Why have I been asked to take part?

You have been asked to participate in this study because you are a student who has interacted with Student Services in the fall 2013 school semester.

Voluntary Participation

This discussion is voluntary and you do not have to take part if you do not want to. If you choose not to take part in it, it will have no effect on your status as a student here at the college. You may leave the group at any time for any reason.

Risks

It is anticipated that there are no risks involved in taking part in this study.

Privacy

One of the most critical principals of research ethics is maintaining the confidentiality of research participants. Your privacy will be protected. There will be no publicly reported information that would identify you as a participant in this study. The focus group will be audio recorded and then transcribed. Files of the transcription will be kept in a password-protected computer that only the researcher has access to. Files will be deleted once the study is completed.

Permission to Tape Consent Form

I am a graduate student in the Counselor Education Master's program at The College at Brockport. Part of the program includes an internship experience to facilitate my learning under the supervision of a Clinical Coordinator and a Site Supervisor. This semester I am working under the supervision of a counselor in Student Services.

As part of my training as a counselor, I am required to conduct research and audio record any focus group that I facilitate. In order to make these audiotapes, I will need your consent. All audiotapes are kept in strict confidence and are used only for transcription purposes.

Please write your name below and check yes or no. If you consent, please sign your name at the bottom.

- ❖ I agree to participate in this focus group and give permission to have it recorded by audiotape.
- ❖ I understand I am free not to participate in recording this focus group, and that it will in no way affect my status as a student.

NAME

_____ Yes, I would like to take part in the focus group.

_____ No, I would not like to participate in the focus group.

SIGNATURE

DATE

Human Subjects Research

Student Consent to Participate in Research and Waiver of FERPA Rights

Study Title: Student Satisfaction with Student Services

Researcher: Natasja Rudge

- ◆ This is a consent form for participation in a research study. It contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate.
- ◆ Your participation is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in this study. If you decide to take part in the study you may leave the study at any time. Your decision will not affect your grades or status at the College.
- ◆ As a result of your student status, your records and personal information are protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Since the data to be obtained may include student record information you will be asked to sign a limited waiver of your FERPA rights for the purpose of this study only.
- ◆ Please review the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and will receive a copy of the form.

Purpose of the study: The purpose of this study is to determine student satisfaction with Student Services. Using a survey and a focus group, the study strives to explore the student experience with the division of Student Services. This study will explore both student experience and student satisfaction with Student Services. The question to be addressed is how satisfied are students with the services available. To answer this question, the researcher will look at the responses of a survey that will be sent out to students who have visited Student Services and use those responses to lead a focus group where students can openly explore their experiences.

Duration of the study: Spring 2014 semester

Participation expectations: Participation in the survey is dependent upon response. Participation in the focus group is expected to be around 10. There are only minimal risks associated with participation in this

research. The survey is voluntary and students participating in the focus group will not be required to give their real names. Students will be invited to openly discuss their experiences with Student Services. There are no psychological or physical risks anticipated. The researcher will facilitate the focus groups to ensure that they feel comfortable with sharing, thereby avoiding psychological risk. Students may feel apprehensive to discuss their negative experiences but the researcher will assure them that they will not be linked to their responses. The direct benefits to the students are that if the study identifies areas that are lacking in the service delivery, step can be taken to find ways to improve these areas so that students get a more positive experience with Student Services.

Confidentiality provisions and Data disposition: The focus group will be transcribed. Files of the transcription will be kept in a password-protected computer that only the researcher has access to. Files will be deleted once the study is completed. The study described in this proposal will be used as part of a thesis/project.

Who can answer questions about the study: Natasja Rudge, 646-644-3447

FERPA RELEASE

In accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), I, the undersigned, hereby authorize _____, the primary research investigator, to gather personal data that may include information in my educational records:

_____ I understand further that (1) I have the right not to consent to the release of my education records; (2) I have the right to receive a copy of such records upon request; (3) and that this consent shall remain in effect unless revoked by me. I may revoke this right at any time, but that any such revocation shall not affect information previously accessed by the research investigator prior to the receipt of any such written revocation.

Printed name of participant

Signature of participant

Date

I have read this form and I am aware that I am being asked to participate in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

I understand that I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form and I will be given a copy of this signed form.

Printed name of participant

Signature of participant

Date

Investigator/Research Staff

I have explained the research to the participant before requesting the signature above. There are no blanks in this document. A signed copy of this form has been given to the participant or his/her representative.

Printed name of person obtaining consent

Signature of person obtaining consent

Date